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SUBJECT: PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION COUNTRY GROUPS APPROVE
WORK PLANS FOR SIERRA LEONE AND BURUNDI

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: Following criticism of the slow pace of Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) work expressed in separate Security Council and General Assembly debates this month, the country-specific component of the PBC has approved ambitious schedules for finalizing peacebuilding "strategies" in Sierra Leone and Burundi, the first two countries under consideration by the PBC. Work Plans, drafted by Norway and The Netherlands, respective Chairs for Sierra Leone and Burundi, aim at finalizing by June recommendations on peacebuilding programs needing donor financing and commitments by the host government with subsequent PBC monitoring of progress. Donors on the ground in both countries have also expressed reservations about the rapid pace and insufficient coordination with existing donor consultation mechanisms, particularly the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and other extant donor/government dialogues. END SUMMARY

¶2. (U) The Peacebuilding Commission met in country-specific format on February 8 and 9 to discuss creation of Integrated Peacebuilding Strategies (IPBS) for the first two countries under PBC consideration, Sierra Leone and Burundi. The IPBS is meant to serve as the overall framework to guide the relationship between the PBC and countries under consideration. The initial proposal notes that: "The nationally owned IPBS will 1) reflect the PBC's understanding of critical peacebuilding challenges; 2) allow for the recording of commitments by both the country and the PBC at large; 3) build on existing national frameworks; 4) include key benchmarks to allow for the monitoring of progress; 5) support the implementation of relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on Burundi and Sierra Leone; and 6) facilitate the integration of all critical peacebuilding of the government and international actors." The Work Plans for the IPBS concept establish a time line for meetings in New York, consultations with the host government, and a PBC visit to the countries under consideration. The Work Plans also dictate an increased pace of work in New York, including thematic country-specific meetings to discuss good governance, rule-of-law, security, and "community recovery" issues prior to finalizing the PBC's recommendations in these areas. Comment: In mission's view, the IPBS concept, as proposed by the Peacebuilding Support Office in this initial draft, asserts a level of control over the national government and other stakeholders engaged in peacebuilding activity that goes beyond the PBC's mandate as defined by UN Security Council Resolution 1645 (2005). End Comment

¶3. (SBU) Given concerns about the expansionary nature of the IPBS non-paper, the US delegate noted that the document had not been reviewed by PBC members, and called for the PBC to evaluate the IPBS framework against the PBC's mandate. This review will take place in an upcoming formal Organizational Committee meeting. Mission has also

expressed concern to PBC members that the IPBS concept will serve as justification for extensive travel to the two countries under consideration by PBSO support staff. PBSO head ASG Carolyn McAskie has told PBC members that she sees a need for a separate, expanded travel budget line item and perhaps additional staff based on the mission outlined for the PBSO in the IPBS concept.

¶4. (SBU) The difficulties of turning the fledgling PBC into a coordination organ capable of the proposed comprehensive oversight role over overall peacebuilding activity in countries under consideration and across the UN system was highlighted in a January 23, 2007 letter from the UK Department of International Development (DFID) to ASG McAskie. DFID complained of a persistent lack of coordination on the ground between the PBC and existing donors in Sierra Leone and Burundi. The letter also sharply criticised PBC priorities for Burundi, noting: "The projects developed are largely development rather than peacebuilding projects. For example, nothing has been allocated to implementing the ceasefire agreement with the FNL, an important peacebuilding issue. There has been no analysis of how the interventions will contribute to peacebuilding, nor have the projects identified emerged from a mapping of existing activity. "

¶5. (SBU) COMMENT: Privately, the Chairs of the two Country-specific Meetings acknowledge that the PBC will likely not finalize strategies for Sierra Leone and Burundi by June (particularly given Sierra Leone elections scheduled for July), but they believe the PBC is capable of completing on schedule the mapping of existing peacebuilding activities and revisions to the initial draft programs and priorities submitted by the host government to the PBC late last year. The DFID letter, however, illustrates continuing tensions

between the peacebuilding priorities of the host government and those of the donors. The letter also provides some insight into persistent friction between the PBSO in New York, the UN Country Team, and existing donor consultation mechanisms in the field. END COMMENT
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